

editorial opinion

The Iranian Crisis and President Reagan

Tell it like it is

President Reagan probably wishes he could forget most of the last several months. In October, came the failure of the Iceland summit with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. In November, Reagan saw the Republicans lose control of the Senate in the elections to the Democrats.

To make matters worse, Reagan faces the most damaging crisis of his presidency — a crisis that has been compared to the Nixon Watergate scandal during the 70s. With each passing day, the American people hear more details about military equipment sold to the anti-American Iranian government, profits from the sales siphoned off to the Nicaraguan Contras and a growing list of administration officials who may be responsible for the dealings.

Clearly, the American people deserve to know the truth. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine truth from Reagan's reality.

An in-depth investigation is the only way to sort fact from fiction, and each branch of the government is in the process of conducting probes of the situation. The most effective investigation appears to be a special congressional committee, similar to the one used during the Watergate scandal.

The special committee will consist of representatives and senators from the 100th Congress, which will start its inquiry after the new session begins in January. This would be better than appointing a committee from the Republican-controlled Senate of the 99th Congress which could hold a Reagan bias.

The advantages of a special committee are clear: The committee will wield many powers, such as the right to subpoena information from White House officials and the right to hold those who are untruthful in contempt of Congress. Private counsel cannot reap those benefits.

Further, the committee, unlike independent or White House investigations, will be less subject to blatant political pressure from Reagan.

In the meantime, the House and the Senate are coordinating panels for independent investigations. In addition, Reagan is setting an independent counsel to investigate the situation.

It is encouraging to see Reagan taking action. He is, at the same time, threatening his credibility by allowing officials to plead the Fifth Amendment at Senate Intelligence Committee hearings.

Since news of the arms deal with Iran broke several weeks ago, the issue has snowballed into a major international crisis. Not only are the members of Reagan's cabinet enmeshed in the controversy, but officials from the National Security Council and Central Intelligence Agency also. The United States and Iran are not the only countries involved in the scam. Nicaragua, Israel, Great Britain and Saudi Arabia have also been implicated.

The special congressional committee is the only way to deal with the issue. Granted, an in-depth investigation by the committee may play ugly and expose even more unsavory acts, but it looks to be the only effective means for the American people to get the truth — entire truth.

America cannot solely rely on the President's good nature, to set the record straight. It is hoped that Reagan has been honest about the issue in his public statements so far, and a full-scale investigation will support his claims or prove otherwise.

If Reagan has been telling the truth, he has nothing to lose by fully cooperating with a congressional committee. If he has been lying, let the truth be known and let the proverbial chips fall where they may.

A justified press corps

Ronald Reagan is one of the most popular presidents the United States has ever had; or at least was, until a few weeks ago.

With the controversy surrounding the Iran-Contra connection, the president's approval rating has slid nearly 20 points since September to 49 percent — the lowest rating Reagan has received since April 1983, according to a recent public opinion survey.

Reagan is being challenged from all fronts — congressional officials, the press, even his wife Nancy, and don't forget the American people. What they want is simple: the truth and subsequent punishment of those responsible for the secret dealings.

The White House controversy is one of international concern and consequence, as seen by the involvement of newspapers around the world in investigations. Although this issue did not develop as a result of national political squabbles like Watergate, it could affect American foreign policy for years to come.

Reagan continues to lash out at the press for their interest in the matter. "What is driving me up the wall is that (the arms deal) wasn't a failure until the press got a tip from that rag in Beirut and began to play it up," Reagan said in *Time* magazine, referring to the pro-Syrian Lebanese magazine that first published accounts of the arms deals.

However, the press is not satisfied by the answers Reagan has been dishing out and rightly so. As the watchdogs of government, journalists should dig to find the truth. The American people deserve to know the truth. Until Reagan plays it straight — if he hasn't already — the press will continue to push for the cold hard facts.

In the sense of a true leader, Reagan has hopefully been honest in his public statements. If he hasn't, it is time he was,

because the public will not stand for lies. Nearly half of the people surveyed by ABC News last week said Reagan should resign if he is lying about what he learned of the connection of U.S. arms shipments to Iran.

Let's suppose that Reagan did not know about the Contra connection. Then two important questions arise: Why didn't he? And who did?

It's unsettling to think that Reagan's staff is wheeling and dealing behind his back. While taking tough stands against terrorism, one wonders whether he is in control of his own cabinet. It becomes evident that he is not in control if he wasn't aware of the situation.

The Contra-Iran controversy has at least blemished — and perhaps permanently scarred — the Reagan administration, but if the situation is left to fester, Reagan's presidency could very well be toppled.

Is not the role of a president to lead the country; to put himself last in order to protect the millions of Americans who entrusted him with its most prestigious and powerful office?

Ronald Reagan needs to confront the situation with candor. America is already aware of at least some controversy brewing; it is unsurmountable that he believes he could just wash his hands entirely clean of the situation.

Any federal investigation is going to take a long time, no matter how simple the facts are to dissect. This controversy may turn a president who has been instrumental in strengthening the economy and introducing major tax reform legislation into a powerless, ineffective leader.

Reagan's domestic and foreign policy initiatives may become stalled until this controversy is settled. Only Reagan or an investigation that could expose embarrassing wrongdoings can settle the matter. Let's hope Reagan knows what to do; if not, congressional investigators will.

opinions

quote/unquote



Linda Teter
freshman
molecular cell biology

"I think they are uncovering a lot more of the scandal than they expected to find. I don't think the arms could be sold without his knowing about it, or at least he certainly should know about what's going on."



Greg Holsenpiller
junior
film

"With all the media publicity it's getting it seems to be turning into another issue like Watergate. What needs to be done is for a completely independent organization to look into all the accusations and come up with what really happened. I do not know if Reagan is guilty, and I will wait to find out."



Lisa Warren
sophomore
computer science

"I do not think Reagan is guilty. I don't think he knew. I just don't think he would have done it knowing what the long-term consequences would be."



Michael Ward
senior
elementary education

"The information found out about the deal was not supposed to be disclosed. In his position certain things have to be carried out discreetly in order to maintain an efficient system."



Margaret Mullins
freshman
division of undergraduate studies

"From what I heard it sounded like Watergate all over again. And, they should investigate it more thoroughly to see if he committed a crime. And, I think he did."



Prateek Sharma
sophomore
philosophy

"I think Reagan, after such harsh talks about terrorism has no right to really have any dealing with a country that has been such a key influence in terrorism. And by doing so, he has supported it."

What do you think of the Iranian situation?

Grades are subject to interpretations varying with each course

By Tammy Spivack

Exams, quizzes, projects... SAT, MCAT, LSAT... pass, fail... grades! Testing plays an important role in your life from the time you enter school. In kindergarten, you are given a reading-readiness test. In second grade you take an I.Q. test. As you get higher in the educational system, grades, without consideration of other aspects such as personality, and motivation, become the single most important educational factor.

forum

Take, for example, the following scenario of a typical college confrontation:

John grinned at the 'A' scrawled at the top of his Political Science exam. There were no other comments on the page, just the ever-so-lovely 'A'. A seat down from John, interrupting his celebration, a tear trickled down Katie's face. "A 'D,'" she turned to him, her cheek dripped with black mascara. "I can't believe it. I thought I was ready for this. I studied so hard. I just got so confused on these multiple choice questions: 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D', 'none of the above', 'all of the above', '1' and '4', '3' and '4'... crapes. If this had been an essay exam, I know I would have done better."

John patted Katie on the shoulder as he sidestepped past her seat. "Ah, don't let it get to you, Katie. You'll do better on the next one."

"Easy for you to say. You got an 'A'. You hardly even studied."

John shrugged. "I don't have to. I've mastered the art of taking multiple choice exams."

Grades: this is a touchy subject. Being the dirtiest word in the college student's vocabulary, perhaps it should be spelled g-r-a-d-e and join the ranks of other four-letter words. There are many reasons why students tend to believe that grades are of the utmost importance in deciding their future success. It is useless, if not ridiculous, for students to develop ulcers because they worry about making Dean's List.

Grades are subject to individual interpretations varying from course to course. Students need not worry so much if they get an 'A' or 'B' on an assignment or test. The borderline between an 'A' and a 'B' is smudged. However, the grade should not be the subject of the argument. The real argument is how much you learn.

In most college catalogs, an 'A' represents excellence in achievement while a 'C' represents average performance. However these assessments, are not true if we look at the performance of the student. It is a given at Penn State, and probably most other colleges, that certain courses are labeled "blow-off" only if you schedule the course with one particular professor, whose name I will not mention. I would hate to be the person at fault for ruining

other students' chances to take advantage of and easy three-credit 'A'.

It is a known fact that this particular professor gives the same true/false exams every semester; they are even on file at Pattee Library. In other words, you never have to go to class, read any of the material, or study for the exams.

Some may call me an unfortunate, uninformed freshman. I took Comparative Literature 106, but I didn't have that particular professor. I went to class, read, I studied for the exams and I got a 'B'. But, ask me about mythology, and I can discuss it intelligently. I am not disappointed that I got a 'B'. I earned it. It is a shame that students feel forced to choose a curriculum which does not challenge their intelligence, to get good grades. It is a waste. College is a "learning" institution, not a grading prison. What you should realize is that it is absolutely senseless to become obsessed with grades. I am well aware that there are many outside forces pressuring you to maintain high grades: teachers, friends, counselors and parents. Disregard these influences. Although parents are great motivators, you cannot allow them to distort your vision of schooling. It is a fact that there is no correlation between grades and future success. You have to learn to control your own sanity and attitudes towards grades.

At this point, some of you may be rapidly nodding your heads in agreement, while others are laughing. Those laughing probably have intentions of applying to a graduate program. Then you might say, "I know grades aren't that important, but tell it to the admissions committee at the law school, or medical, or graduate school I want to get into."

This common phobia is quite understandable, but you must remember that there are other important factors. Employers and admissions committees are looking for well-rounded students, people who can relate to other people, not books. The person with a 3.4 G.P.A. who was in a business fraternity, the Outing Club, played soccer and held a job will probably fare much better in an interview than the student with a 3.9 who could draw a detailed diagram of the campus library. Laugh, if you must, but ponder the reasoning. If a student does nothing but study, of course he can maintain higher grades.

The format of the examination, the teacher, the subject matter, prior preparation for the course, and the student's interest in the subject are all considerations in grade assignments.

What attitude can you adopt to survive the battle of grades? Just strive for you best. Not achieving them can only motivate you to work harder. Do not depend too much on grades to evaluate your successes and failures. Approach your schoolwork with an eagerness to learn, not simply pass. Lastly, always remember what William Saroyan, a great writer, once said, "Good people are good because they've come to success through failure."

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the Collegian

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The House that Ron built... in which he was almost invulnerable...



...almost



Hey America:

With Ron, at least we are safe

The year 2004. Ronald Reagan was a good president. He knew how to run the economy. With Ron you knew you had a job, and prices would remain stable. Ron knew how to get on the TV and talk; he had personality.

Ron cleaned up the welfare mess in this country too. He got rid of most of those welfare programs and made the free loaders go out and get a job. Ron made America strong again in the eyes of the world, and God knows we were in sorry shape after Carter. Ron took the hard stand against the Soviets and fought communism throughout the world.

Ron was committed to the fight against that destroyer of American culture, communism. When Congress denied military aid to the freedom fighters in Nicaragua, he stepped onto Congress and made sure they got their money through the Iranian arms deal.

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The fight in Nicaragua did not go well. The freedom fighters just didn't have the technical competence so Ron sent in American military advisers to help them.

One day, the communists killed one of the advisers. Ron retaliated, and the war escalated. Fairly soon we had the American armed forces in Nicaragua fighting these communists, but at least we were safe.

Ron's term as president ended, and his successor was George Bush. George continued Ron's policies because Ron was popular, and George wanted to be well-liked too. The government had to borrow more to meet the deficits. More money was printed to pay the deficits; inflation increased. More American soldiers came home dead from Nicaragua.

Things got worse, and the country went through a rapid succession of presidents: Hart, Kemp and Bradley. Inflation became unbearable. It was pretty difficult for most Americans to afford a car, let alone a house.

The number of Americans below the poverty line was increasing. The poor were upset because the government had few welfare programs to help them, yet thousands were in the army and being killed in Nicaragua. Riots broke out in the big cities. To aid the war effort the president re-instituted the draft.

One fateful day the government announced it could not meet its debt obligations. All government bonds were redeemable at only half of the face value. Coupled with the rapid inflation, this announcement shook America.



Things became worse. The inflation had destroyed almost everyone's savings. Many people were destitute. The violence protesting the war and economic conditions heightened. Something had to be done; things were pretty desperate.

Now Jimmy Swaggart had run for the presidency in past three elections. No one had paid much attention to him, but he did have a lot of money and a large group of loyal supporters.

For the upcoming election Swaggart toned down his religiosity. He simply promised to end the violence in the streets and the inflation. Americans were desperate. They had given the Democrats and Republicans numerous chances, now they turned to the one man who gave them hope. Swaggart was elected president by the slimmest of margins.

After the election a constitutional convention was called. Due to the desperate situation the country was in, Swaggart asked for and received special emergency powers.

First he ended the violence in the streets by military forces. Then he limited economic activity to gain a grip on inflation. Then he censored the newspapers and television stations to keep the American people from panicking.

Trouble was Swaggart never gave back his emergency powers. He fulfilled the promises he had made years earlier on his television program. He rounded up all the homophobes and put them in "camps" in order to protect the public from AIDS.

He instituted the literal teaching of the Bible in public schools. Biblical law became national law. To publicly contradict the Bible in public became a crime punishable by prison. But at least we are safe.

Brian Metrick is a sophomore majoring in history and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His columns appear every other Tuesday.

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